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ABSTRACT

In 1995 the Alabama Commission on Higher Education developed a new 5-year plan for higher education that emphasized cooperation among all stakeholders. The plan is designed to focus attention on important strategic issues facing Alabama higher education and the state, and to forge new or enhanced relationships to work cooperatively toward common goals and issue resolution. In establishing the framework for higher education planning, it is necessary to consider the current system of higher education in the state, the shared-power environment for issue resolution, and trends and issues likely to affect higher education. The Commission establishes, in this document, five goals for Alabama higher education: (1) access; (2) cooperation; (3) excellence; (4) responsibility, and (5) responsiveness. The strategic issues facing Alabama higher education for the 1996-2000 planning period include finding ways to demonstrate educational and financial accountability and ways to respond to demands for educational needs and services. Another strategic issue is that of identifying and addressing access, completion, and equity issues. Some actions are outlined to work on each of these strategic issues as the Alabama system of higher education responds to the needs of students and society through wise stewardship of state resources. (Contains 32 references.) (SLD)

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ED 446 586

Alabama Commission on Higher Education

State Plan

Enhancing Our Strengths Through a Shared Vision
Planning for Alabama Higher Education
1996-2000

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Alabama Commission on Higher Education

State Plan

Enhancing Our Strengths Through a Shared Vision
Planning for Alabama Higher Education
1996-2000

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Mission Statement of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (Commission), a statewide 12-member lay board appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House and confirmed by the Senate, is the state agency responsible for the overall statewide planning and coordination of higher education in Alabama, the administration of various student aid programs, and the performance of designated regulatory functions. The Commission seeks to promote reasonable access to quality collegiate and university education for the citizens of Alabama. In meeting this commitment, the Commission facilitates informed decision making and policy formulation regarding wise stewardship of resources in response to the needs of students and the goals of the institutions. The agency also provides a state-level framework for institutions to respond cooperatively and individually to the needs of the citizens of the state.

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Vision For Alabama Higher Education

The Alabama higher education system provides reasonable access to quality collegiate and university education to prepare an educated citizenry and a competitive work force for the future. Focused on accomplishments, the higher education system displays accountability and performance in instruction, research, and public service. This system of higher education responds to the needs of students and society through wise stewardship of state resources. Using cooperative planning, the Alabama higher education system recognizes the unique contributions of all sectors, including two-year and four-year institutions and K-12.

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BACKGROUND

In August 1991, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (Commission) adopted a state plan for higher education, Investing in Alabama's Future: State-Level Strategic Objectives for Higher Education. This plan was based on Commission initiatives and reports on higher education issues by various groups and study commissions. In the 1991 plan, the Commission set forth four state-level goals for higher education: collaboration, access, quality instruction, and research and economic development. It also established 26 state-level objectives as indicators of progress toward the achievement of the goals.

From 1991-95, both the Commission and the institutions sponsored projects and initiatives to support the state-level goals and objectives for higher education. "Investment in the Future: A Summary of Progress Toward the Goals & Objectives Contained in the 1991 State Higher Education Plan" provided a detailed account of the status of each objective, a summary of Commission initiatives undertaken from 1991-95 to promote the objectives, and a list of outcomes of the initiatives. Additionally, a staff report to the Commission on March 18, 1994 summarized institutional initiatives.

At its planning retreat in May 1995, the Commission focused on many complex issues facing Alabama and its higher education system. Fiscal realities and existing governance structures set the parameters for discussion of these issues. The Commissioners were frank in their views that issue resolution in higher education must occur through cooperative working relationships across sector, governing board, agency, institutional, community, and legislative lines. To that end, the Commission resolved to develop a new five-year planning document for Alabama higher education that emphasized cooperation among all stakeholders.

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the state plan for higher education is twofold: 1) to focus public attention on important strategic issues facing Alabama higher education and the state, and 2) to forge new or enhanced relationships to work cooperatively toward common goals and issue resolution. This plan is ambitious. At the end of the five-year planning cycle, certain elements of the state-level issues may be resolved, but other challenges will remain. New state-level issues will be emerging. Such change is the environment of planning. The key question to be asked will be whether the state has made progress toward issue resolution and goal attainment.

Resources for Plan Development

To set the context for plan development, the staff reviewed reports and studies that highlighted important

issues facing higher education in the state and nation. Of particular note were two recent reports that made recommendations to the Commission and to the higher education community in Alabama: Accent on Quality, A Report of the Sixth Quadrennial Evaluation Committee and "Report of Sub-Committee B (Postsecondary Education) to the Joint Legislative Committee on Finances & Budgets."

In the last year of each gubernatorial term, the Commission is required to appoint a committee of at least three consultants who are not associated with Alabama higher education to evaluate the effectiveness of its work and to recommend changes. The Sixth Evaluation Committee presented its report in April 1995. A team of six consultants conducted in-depth interviews and surveys with governmental officials, institutional representatives, legislators, and community leaders. Based on their analyses, the team offered recommendations on how the Commission and the institutions might work together more effectively. "Report of Subcommittee B (Postsecondary Education) to the Joint Legislative Committee on Finances & Budgets" offered recommendations for improving quality and efficiency in higher education.

Additionally, four members of the Council of Presidents submitted written recommendations to the Commission in April and May 1995 on state-level issues facing Alabama higher education. State Board of Education members who attended the May 1995 retreat also offered ideas for consideration.

Several drafts of the state plan were prepared and circulated to over 200 institutional representatives, legislators, and community and business leaders for comment. Those comments were given full consideration and incorporated into the plan where appropriate. A list of all written references consulted in the preparation of this plan is included.

Legislative Priorities

While the new state plan for Alabama higher education was under development, the 1996 Alabama legislature adopted a package of bills and a joint resolution related to higher education. This action established legislative priorities for Alabama higher education, including 1) creation of a Higher Education Funding Advisory Commission to propose a new funding approach that is performance-based and uses other incentive funding approaches; 2) viability analysis of existing programs; 3) student and faculty databases, 4) facilities master plans; and 5) definition of resident student and prescribed tuition rates for nonresident students. These legislative priorities were incorporated in the state plan for higher education.

Definition of Higher Education

The term higher education is used throughout this document. In this context, higher education includes all public two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions in the state. Where appropriate, the narrative includes references to private postsecondary institutions.

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CONTEXT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PLANNING

Three areas must be considered in establishing the framework within which higher education planning occurs: 1) a description of the current system of higher education in the state; 2) the shared-power environment for issue resolution; and 3) trends and issues that likely will affect the higher education system.

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Description of Alabama Higher Education

Institutions of higher education in Alabama, like those in other states, serve three primary functions: instruction, research, and public service. Each institution in the state gives a unique emphasis to these primary functions. Academic excellence is the cornerstone of all institutions of higher education, but research and public service also are important because of their close links to economic development and the expansion of knowledge.

The Alabama system of higher education includes diverse institutions spread geographically throughout the state: fifteen public four-year universities, one public upper-division baccalaureate college, seventeen public community colleges, five public junior colleges, ten public technical colleges, fifteen private universities and colleges, one private junior college, and many proprietary institutions. This system is described in more detail in the Statistical Abstract: Higher Education in Alabama available from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. Autonomous boards of trustees govern public four-year universities, some of which include multi-campus systems, while the State Board of Education governs the public two-year institutions and an upper-division college. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education is the state-level coordinating agency for higher education with regulatory and advisory authority in specified areas. Autonomous boards of trustees also govern private institutions.

Shared-Power Environment

Given current governance structures, state-level coordination, and legislative interest, Alabama higher education exists in a "shared-power" environment. No single agency, institution, governing board or other entity has the power or authority to resolve most issues facing Alabama higher education. Issue resolution in Alabama higher education requires cooperative working relationships among institutions, sectors, and groups that may have different goals and mandates.

Institutional Diversity

The role of public institutions of higher education in Alabama is quite diverse. Institutions offer degrees ranging from a certificate to doctorate to first professional degree. Program offerings are consistent with instructional role statements approved by the Commission for each institution. A complete description of the instructional role statements will be published separately later this year.

Alabama higher education institutions are complex entities. Each institution exhibits social, economic, and political aspects that involve most of the people of the state. For example, public higher education in Alabama directly employs over 32,000 full-time employees (IPEDS, 1993 Fall Staff Survey). These institutions expend almost $2.7 billion annually (IPEDS, Finance FY 1994). In some localities, a college is the dominant employer and spender. Many institutions have conducted economic impact studies that document the importance of the institutions to the communities.

Public higher education in Alabama has a high participation rate compared to other states. In July 1994, for example, Alabama's total population ranked 22nd in the nation; yet enrollment in public two-year and four-year institutions per 1000 persons ranked 3rd. The people of Alabama have responded to this demand for education by devoting scarce tax revenue to a degree that outweighs their relative wealth. However, the heavy use of Alabama's public higher education weights down regular teaching revenues per student to a ranking of 35th (Research Associates of Washington).

Although higher education in Alabama is predominantly public, the private sector plays a significant role. This sector includes traditional two-year and four-year colleges, many of which are church-related, and proprietary institutions offering specialized programs of postsecondary instruction. While the private sector (including proprietary institutions) represents the greatest number of institutions, the public two-year and four-year institutions enroll most of the students in higher education in Alabama.

Throughout most of Alabama's history, higher education was provided largely by traditional, residential four-year institutions. In recent decades, however, many urban campuses emerged, and an extensive system of two-year community, junior, and technical colleges developed throughout the state.

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Trends & Issues Affecting Alabama Higher Education

Reviewing the trends and issues affecting Alabama higher education is a difficult challenge. All current events and issues have the potential to affect some aspect of the higher education system in a significant way. Further, few would debate that Alabama and the nation are undergoing rapid change. However, the direction and impact of that change cannot be predicted with absolute certainty.

The following commentary attempts to identify those trends and issues that are important for state-level higher education planning, but does not represent an exhaustive list. Nonetheless, the summary should promote discussion of the priority issues facing the higher education leadership among the institutions, the legislative and executive branches of government, the business community, and community and civic groups.

Financial Trends

Alabamians are investing approximately two percentage points less of their public budgets on higher education than 10 years ago (Marks, pp. 1-2). The level of funding provided to Alabama higher education has been below averages for the southern region for years. Consider that in 1994-95, the funding level for higher education in Alabama was 69 percent of the 1994-95 regional average, compared to 79 percent in 1991. Alabama's state government spending for colleges (adjusted for inflation) grew 41 percent in the past decade; however, it did not keep pace with the fastest growing parts of the public budget. Other areas of state government were competing for limited resources. From 1981-1992, for example, expenditures in Alabama for social welfare increased over six percentage points while expenditures for all education (K-PhD) decreased approximately six percentage points (Marks, pg. 1). Since 1990, appropriations to Alabama public higher education have been prorated twice (1990-91 and 1991-92). In 1995-96, higher education received an approximate seven and a half percent across the board cut. In actual dollars, public higher education has received a 25.2 percent increase in appropriations since 1990-91. Adjusted for inflation and enrollments, appropriations per headcount increased only four percent. In 1996-97, institutions received approximately the same level of funding as in 1995-96. Financial pressures are likely to continue as citizens call for no new taxes and greater accountability; efforts continue to balance the federal budget; federal and state governments downsize staffing; and K-12 and higher education compete for funding in the legislative arena. Further, two court cases, Title VI and equity funding may affect the continuing resources available to support public higher education in the state.

Student Demographic Trends

More students are attending Alabama colleges and universities than 10 years ago. Consequently, the state is

educating more students with fewer resources. From 1986-94, for example, enrollment in Alabama public higher education increased by approximately 46,300 students from a fall headcount of 161,505 in 1986 to 207,825 in 1994. The total increase in the number of students in the public four-year sector (23,371) was approximately the same as in the two-year sector (22,949) (IPEDS Fall Enrollment Reports, 1986, 1994). Unfortunately, progress in providing access to college has not been matched with similar progress in college completions. The percentage of students in the nation and in the SREB region who complete degree programs within six years of entering college has not changed significantly since the late 1980s. The percentages range from 35 to 59 percent at southern public four-year colleges, compared to 55 percent nationally (Creech, p. 41). No Alabama-specific data are available.

While most college students in Alabama are traditional-age, an increasing percentage (now 35 percent) are 25 years old or older. Women outnumber men in undergraduate and graduate schools and approach 40 percent of students in professional schools. Black students now comprise a larger part of Alabama's college students than since the late 1970s. The number of black students is growing at an above-average rate (Marks, p. 12). Unfortunately, black adults continue to trail white adults in years of education. In 1990, nine percent of black Alabamians and 17 percent of white Alabamians had graduated from college; however, 20 percent of black Alabamians and 22 percent of white Alabamians had attended college for some period (Marks, p. 9). Most of the minority population in Alabama consists of black citizens (25 percent of the state population) and will so remain in the future (Marks, p. 8).

The overwhelming majority of postsecondary education in Alabama occurs on a main campus. Although the number of off-campus sites more than doubled from Fall 1983 to Fall 1993, the number of off-campus sites has declined significantly since Fall 1993. In 1993-94, 97 percent of the state's credit hour production was on-campus. On-campus credit hour production was higher for senior institutions (99 percent) than for two-year colleges (96 percent) (ACHE, 1993-94; ADPE).

Part-time students, though not a majority of enrollment in Alabama, have increased over the last eight years. Currently, part-time students represent over one-third of the students in the higher education system (IPEDS Fall Enrollment Reports). In Fall 1986, 69 percent of the total headcount was full-time and 31 percent part-time. By Fall 1994, full-time headcount had declined to 64 percent and part-time headcount had increased to 36 percent. Most of the headcount increases from 1984-94 in the two-year sector were in part-time students. Conversely, most of the increases in four-year institutions were in full-time students. Four-year and two-year institutions reported equivalent enrollment increases for the 1984-94 period, but the enrollment status of the students in each sector was quite different. Part-time students represented approximately 65 percent of the enrollment increase in the two-year sector. In contrast, full-time students accounted for 61 percent of the enrollment increase in the four-year institutions.

Out-of-state students are an important component of higher education because of their contributions to the cultural diversity of a campus. In Alabama, out-of-state students are declining as a proportion of first-time entering freshmen in public colleges. Total headcount enrollment in the state increased from 161,100 in 1986 to 207,825 in 1994. For many years, the number of out-of-state students had averaged around 25,000 reaching an apparent peak of 30,400 at four-year colleges in Fall 1994 (comparable information was not available for two-year colleges). Consequently, out-of-state student enrollment increased from 12 percent to 15 percent of the total higher education enrollments. Act 96-663, passed during the 1996 legislative session, established procedures for determining eligibility for resident/nonresident tuition and set minimum procedures for reclassification from nonresident to resident status. The Act also required public institutions to begin charging a nonresident tuition at least twice the resident tuition, effective August 1, 1997.

Race & Gender Issues

Alabama higher education can boast many improvements in race and gender representation in faculty,

administrators, enrollments and completions, but much remains to be done. For example, minorities are gaining in the percentage of headcount enrollment in public institutions in Alabama. In Fall 1986, minorities comprised 22 percent of the total headcount enrollment, increasing to 26 percent by Fall 1994 (IPEDS Fall Enrollment Reports). Additionally, the percentage of nonwhite citizens with baccalaureate degrees has increased from a little over one percent in 1950 to 10 percent in 1990. However, "the gap between whites and nonwhites widened over the last four decades at the highest levels of educational attainment (i.e., graduation from a college or university) (Bogie, p. 12)." The number of baccalaureate degrees awarded to black Alabamians increased approximately 16 percent from 1991-92 to 1992-93 (IPEDS Completions Reports), and the percentage of black full-time faculty and administrators in Alabama senior institutions has increased almost nine percent from Fall 1991 to Fall 1993 (Title VI Statewide Monitoring Committee).

The status of women in Alabama higher education also merits attention. In 1994-95, women comprised 15 percent of full professors, 27 percent of associate professors, 44 percent of assistant professors and 62 percent of instructors in public four-year institutions (ACHE, 1995, Statistical Abstract, p. 60). These data are consistent with national data that show that while women hold 32 percent of full-time faculty positions, these are overwhelmingly in lower ranks. In 1991, women comprised 15 percent of full professors, 28 percent of associate professors, 40 percent of assistant professors, and 46 percent of instructors/lecturers (Amos, p. 37). Similar rates occur for part-time faculty, administrators, and chief executive officer positions (Amos, pp. 36-38). Gender discrimination still exists on campus, despite recent improvements in the status of women in higher education (Amos, p. 38).

Accountability Trends & Issues

Increasing public demands for accountability in higher education heard throughout the country also have sounded in Alabama. Examples of such calls include the 1994 legislation establishing the Articulation and General Studies Committee to develop a statewide general studies curriculum and address articulation problems; reports such as the "Report of Subcommittee B to the Joint Legislative Committee on Finances & Budgets" released in April 1995 that raised issues related to time-to-degree completion; the budget reduction for higher education for FY 95-96 and the Governor's proposed budget cuts for FY 96-97; and the various acts passed in the most recent legislative session that focus on performance-based funding, academic program viability, student and faculty databases, facilities master planning, and tuition rates and residency requirements.

Institutions have worked cooperatively with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education to improve quality and accountability. The revision of the Commission's off-campus review criteria in 1995 to include accountability measures received high visibility. Additionally, since 1990 Alabama public institutions have been evaluating the viability of existing academic programs once every five years. The initial goals of this process were selective program improvement leading to increased degree productivity, selective program reduction, and improved resource allocation.

Standards to identify programs for review were based on degree completions calculated on a five-year average and varied by degree level. The initial standards applied to reviews conducted during 1990-95 were: diploma, certificate (45-90 hrs), associate, baccalaureate, 5; master's, 2.5; education specialist, 2; and doctoral, 1.5. Commission policy escalated the standards by 50 percent for the second viability analysis; however, Act 96-557 passed in the 1996 legislative session mandated a program viability process using the escalated standards.

As a result of the program review process, the number of entries in the four-year academic program inventory declined by 12 percent and the number of entries in the two-year academic program inventory declined by 17 percent. Senior institutions continued 61 percent of the programs identified for review, but

expected that 48 percent of the continued programs would not meet the escalated standard. Two-year institutions continued 60 percent of the programs identified for review and expected that 19 percent would not meet the escalated standard. Act 96-557 adopted on May 9, 1996 mandated that the Commission monitor and report on minimum productivity standards at two-year and four-year institutions on an annual basis using the following standards: diploma, certificate (45-90 qh), associate, and baccalaureate, 7.5; master's, 3.75; education specialist, 3; and doctoral, 2.25. Failure to meet these mandated standards will result in program termination unless the Commission grants the institution a waiver of non- viability.

During the last five years, new program development has declined in senior institutions. Graduate program approvals remained stable, ranging from five each in 1990 and 1991 to four each in 1992 and 1993, two in 1994, and three in 1995. Undergraduate program approvals ranged from three to five annually. New program development in two-year institutions increased from 0 in 1990 to 17 in 1993 and 23 in 1994, and back to one in 1995. New program activity in two-year institutions was due to 17 new program approvals for one institution and 13 new allied health program approvals in response to the termination of the UAB allied health linkage. Based on the last five years, the level of new program development projected for 1996-2000 is uncertain.

Students' Share of the Cost of Higher Education

With less public investment in higher education, Alabama students and their families are paying more for higher education (Marks, p. 3). In 1983, state funding provided 70 percent of revenues for Alabama public colleges and universities. Tuition and fees contributed 28 percent. By 1993, the percent of revenues from state funding had dropped to 62 percent while the increase of revenues from tuition and fees had increased to 38 percent. The burden on students and their families is reflected in the significant increases in tuition and fees. Since the early 1970s, tuition and fees at public two-year colleges in Alabama have quadrupled; public university tuition costs have increased almost fivefold; and private university costs have increased six times more.

The significance of the increased financial burden on Alabama students and their families is reflected in the state's per capita income of $17,234 that is still below regional ($19,077) and national ($20,817) averages. (Marks, p. 9). Although the state has made impressive gains in per capita income in the last forty years, averages for the southern region and the nation also increased. As a result, Alabamians' per capita income continues to lag behind the region and the nation.

Often, Alabamians are increasing their dependence on student loans to meet financial needs for higher education (Marks, p. 5). Twenty years ago, loans accounted for one-fourth of the student aid; now they account for half. When adjusted for inflation, federal funds for grants have decreased by one-fourth, federal loans have increased four times, and aid provided by colleges and universities and selective state programs have doubled.

U.S. Population Trends

Continuing changes in family structures and child rearing are affecting higher education in the nation and in Alabama. The significant increase in one-parent families because of divorce and births to single mothers has led to significant growth in poverty. In addition, the percentage of children and teens in foster care, the level of child abuse and neglect, and teenage crime all have increased. Student achievement in many middle and high schools is declining as antisocial behavior increases. (Refer to the recently published "Alabama Kids Data Sheet" to track similar trends in the state of Alabama.) These trends have important implications for colleges and universities including the increased need for campus security, student services and counseling, remedial education, and financial aid (Keller, p. 25).

Another important trend is that the U.S. population is becoming more polarized with a decline in the middle class. From 1973 to 1990, the poorest fifth of the population declined in income about 12 percent while the richest fifth increased about 25 percent (Keller, p. 25). This trend has resulted in two dramatically different demands on higher education. At one end of the spectrum, students want more honor's programs, three-year baccalaureates, and graduate programs, while at the other end, many students are unprepared for collegiate study.

Remedial Education Needs

In the southern region, one-third of the first-time freshmen in public and private institutions must enroll in at least one remedial course, usually mathematics. It is not uncommon for these students also to need extra help in reading or writing before they can begin college-level work (Abraham). Additionally, remedial education is not the exclusive domain of any sector of the educational system. Among public institutions, students at four-year and two-year colleges are just about as likely to require remedial education. On average, about 25 percent of the freshman class in the South's most selective doctoral/research universities take at least one remedial course (Abraham).

In Alabama, approximately 35 percent of full-time first year students enroll in remedial courses; 34 percent of first year students need remediation in math, 25 percent in writing, and 24 percent in reading (Abraham). While it appears that Alabamians will need remedial course work for some time, there are indications that preparation for college is improving. This year, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted new graduation requirements for the high school diploma and the high school diploma with advanced academic endorsement. With exception of two years of a foreign language and Algebra II instead of Algebra I, the new standard diploma is more stringent than the previous advanced diploma.

New Markets for Higher Education

Because high school graduate population in Alabama is projected to remain stable for the next ten years, institutions may explore potential new student markets with enthusiasm (WICHE, p. 22). One source of students may be older Alabamians. For the next 30 years, there will be a dramatic aging of the population in Alabama, much like that expected in many other states (Marks, p. 7). This trend may bring a new constituency into higher education--retirees. It also may cause institutions to revise their offerings to reflect the needs of an aging population (Keller, p. 25).

Technology Trends

Growth in communications technology available to higher education. These technologies include computers, cassettes, films, satellite transmission, and the Internet. This technology will change how we gather, store, and exchange information, but it will come with a price tag. Not only will classrooms and campus libraries have to be renovated to accommodate these technologies, but training programs for faculty and students must be established. At present, no statewide mechanism exists to coordinate the growth and use of technology in higher education. Pressures for such a mechanism may increase due to financial considerations to promote orderly growth.

Importance of Making Higher Education a Priority

Although educational attainment in Alabama is higher than ever, it remains below the national and regional averages. In 1990, only 16 percent of Alabamians had graduated from college, compared with 19 percent in the southern region and 20 percent in the nation. Also, only 22 percent of Alabamians had attended college in 1990, compared to 24 percent in the southern region and 25 percent in the nation. Further, only 67 percent of Alabamians had graduated from high school in 1990 compared to 71 percent in the southern

region and 75 percent in the nation (Marks, p. 8).

Why is it so important that Alabamians make higher education a priority with all the other demands on the state? The level of education of Alabamians is directly related to lifetime earnings. It also affects the resources available to state government to carry out necessary functions and services (Bogie, p. 16). The estimated lifetime earnings of a high school graduate are $821,000 compared to $993,000 for a person with some college, $1,062,000 for a person with an associate degree, $1,421,000 for a person with a bachelor's degree, $1,619,000 for a person with a master's degree, and $2,142,000 for a person with a doctorate. Alabamians also benefit from higher education in ways that are not related to economics. Through higher education, Alabamians prepare for informed citizenship and careers and improve their quality of life.

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Assumptions

Based on the trends and issues highlighted in the previous section, the Commission formulates the following state-level planning assumptions for the 1996-2000 planning period.

1. Current economic and political climates make long-term funding forecasts for higher education uncertain.
2. Results of recent court cases may have significant implications on the distribution of resources available to support higher education.
3. Calls for accountability and performance from the public, business community, and legislature may lead to an examination of state-level accountability measures. Institutions and boards of trustees will scrutinize existing missions, programs and operations with a focus on improving quality, efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Costs associated with attending college will increase during the five-year period.
5. Institutions will explore uses of alternative delivery methods, and pressures will increase to coordinate these activities.
6. The need for remedial education in Alabama will remain at the current level for the next five years.
7. Total enrollments in higher education will remain stable, but the number of part-time and/or older students will increase with potential impact on the types of courses offered and scheduling and delivery variations.
8. The number of high school graduates will remain stable throughout the five-year planning period.
9. Average educational attainment by Alabama citizens will continue to increase, but will not equal regional and national averages.
10. Race and gender representation in Alabama higher education will continue to be a focus of attention during the next five years.

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GOALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

Based on the current economic, political, and social environment, the Commission establishes five goals for Alabama higher education. These goals are ends toward which effort should be directed during the next five years. No single goal has a greater priority than others and achievement of all goals is important to the state.

Access: To provide each Alabama resident an equal opportunity for and reasonable access to higher education programs most appropriate to his or her needs and abilities.

Cooperation: To enhance and improve education at all levels and to promote efficient use of resources by forming partnerships and academic alliances across sector, governing board, agency, institutional, community, and legislative lines.

Excellence: To provide high quality programs of instruction, research, and service through continuous program evaluation, adequate financial support, application of standards, rigor in the educational process, and demonstration of competence of graduates.

Responsibility: To demonstrate the effective and efficient use of resources.

Responsiveness: To provide a system of higher education that responds to the changing needs of individuals and society by offering high quality programs of instruction, research, and service appropriate to instructional role.

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ACTION AGENDA 1996-2000

Strategic Issues Facing Alabama Higher Education and Strategies for Change

Strategic issues are the fundamental policy questions that affect an organization. In this plan, strategic issues are the critical challenges facing Alabama higher education. By definition, strategic issues involve conflicts of one sort or another. This point is particularly important given that Alabama higher education exists in a "shared-power" environment. Typically, a strategic issue statement contains three elements: a) a brief description of the issue with the primary concern framed as a question, b) a list of factors that make the issue a fundamental challenge to the organization, and c) consequences of failing to address the issue (Bryson, pp. 30-31). The Alabama Commission on Higher Education identifies three strategic issues facing Alabama higher education for the 1996-2000 planning period.

Strategic Issue 1: ***In what ways can Alabama higher education demonstrate educational and financial accountability?***

Strategic Issue 2: ***How can Alabama higher education efficiently and effectively respond to demands for educational needs and services?***

Strategic Issue 3: ***How can Alabama higher education identify and address access, completion, and equity issues?***

These three strategic issues are not presented in any priority order. Given the variety of stakeholders involved, it would be difficult to reach agreement on a priority order. However, these strategic issues are important to the state and its citizens. As stated previously in the background section, working toward the resolution of these three strategic issues over the next five years is an ambitious undertaking. Clearly, different stakeholders will assume leadership roles on different issues. Progress on the resolution of these issues will depend on the significance attached to the issues by key stakeholders. These strategic issues serve as an "action agenda" for Alabama higher education. A series of strategies follow each strategic issue.

These strategies vary by level, function, and time frame, but have two common characteristics. First, each strategy will promote the resolution of the strategic issue. However, it is unlikely that any single strategy will resolve a strategic issue. Complex issues will require multiple strategies for resolution. Second, each strategy is designed to be technically workable and politically acceptable.

Building a Sense of Community

A central theme in these strategic issues and strategies is building a sense of "community" in Alabama higher education. The Sixth Quadrennial Evaluation Committee recommended: "That the Commission exert leadership to strengthen the sense of community in Alabama higher education, to promote a more effective 'system' view and operation of Alabama Higher Education--a system in which each campus partner is respected for its unique contribution to the state and its citizens; is held responsible for both educational and financial stewardship and integrity; is intimately involved in the construction and implementation of a statewide long range plan for higher education; is treated with equity by financial and budgeting policies; and is expected to offer public evidence on the quality and effectiveness of its performance (p. 38)." However, the Committee noted that this 'system' must have partnership contributions from governing board and institutional leadership. Without this sense of community, Alabama higher education may approach strategic issue resolution by responding to vested interests rather than the interests of the state as a whole: "We . . . could not discern that mutual respect for different missions and different contributions existed among the institutions, their boards, and the Commission. Developing a keener sense of teamwork and partnership is a long term occupation .. . but one that remains a notable leadership challenge for all of Alabama higher education (p.5)."

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Strategic Issue 1:
In what ways can Alabama higher education demonstrate educational and financial accountability?

Demands for accountability in higher education are not new. However, as federal and state governments look for ways to cut spending and citizens reject tax increases, public entities must demonstrate accountability and quality with increasing frequency and intensity. Often there is little agreement on how higher education should be accountable, particularly if state-level standards are considered. Generally, institutions prefer as much flexibility as possible, and state- level mandates often limit flexibility. This lack of agreement on the roles of the state and the institution in demonstrating accountability is due to concerns about institutional autonomy and academic freedom versus state intervention and control. Since higher education operates in a political and social environment, state government demands for accountability and quality in higher education are not surprising, but such demands can be met in a variety of ways. One challenge is to respond to demands for accountability and quality while maintaining appropriate institutional autonomy.

Strategies: 1.1 Develop consensus on the expected performance for Alabama higher education and identify ways that progress can be monitored and linked to the state's budgeting process to document accomplishments and funding needs.

The April 5, 1995 report of the Alabama Joint Legislative Committee on Finances and Budgets noted that the public is demanding accountability for its money. "Many states are moving toward strong performance-based outcome measures to assess the accountability of higher education. In other states the governing boards, themselves, initiated these measures (p. 4)." The Sixth Quadrennial Evaluation Committee also noted that Alabama is one of two states in the southeast that does not have a state-level

performance indicator system in place. The Committee cited examples of performance indicators used by Tennessee and South Carolina and recommended that Alabama consider a similar undertaking: "That the Commission take a more aggressive stance in promoting the nurture and demonstration of quality among all campuses in the state by developing a policy that calls for campuses to develop a cluster of performance indicators that would offer public evidence on quality as related to that campus's mission; and establishing a cluster of statewide performance indicators that could be linked to the assessment of progress on statewide goals for higher education (p. 39)." Senate Joint Resolution 32 passed during the 1996 legislative session calls for a mechanism to link funding and performance in Alabama higher education. The Resolution established a Higher Education Funding Advisory Commission (HEFAC), composed of institutional representatives and a member of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. HEFAC must develop a proposed new funding approach for higher education that is performance-based and uses other incentive funding approaches. Working with the Legislative Joint Fiscal Committee and the Governor, the HEFAC must complete its work by October 1, 1998.

Performance indicators and performance-based funding should document accomplishments and funding needs. This goal is particularly important in Alabama given that state funding for institutions and statewide programs has come under scrutiny in recent years. In FY 1995-96, for example, approximately seven and a half percent was cut from state funding for institutions. Deeper cuts were made in some statewide programs. The 1995-96 appropriation for the institutions was approximately 58 percent of what was calculated as the Regional Standard. Although higher education hopes that these funding cuts will be restored, the reality may be that inflationary increases, at best, may be all that will be received for the next few years. This level of funding impacts the ability of Alabama higher education to meet the needs of students and to carry out the goals in this plan. This impact occurs not only at the institutional level but at the state level also (for example, the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries, the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, and the Eminent Scholars Program.) These programs have experienced significant cuts in state funding despite their records of achievement. Through performance indicators and performance-based funding, institutions and statewide programs can prepare more effective presentations on accomplishments and funding needs for the Governor, the legislature, and the public.

1.2 Improve access to state-level higher education data.

Although 41 states currently have multi-institutional student databases for higher education, the present state-level higher education data system in Alabama is limited to institutional summary data only. Under the existing system, there is no way to track students across institutions and sectors, to track and monitor the status of out-of-state students enrolled in Alabama institutions, or to assess student retention and completion rates for all sectors of education. Further, the current system does not have a mechanism for providing feedback to high schools and transfer institutions on the performance of students. Recently, the institutions (public and private, two-year and four-year) and the Commission worked cooperatively to create and pilot test a Migration and Retention Database. After defining data elements and creating a record structure, the group tested the design and was ready to expand the project statewide. Before the project was expanded, however, the 1996 legislature adopted two acts that called for the Commission to establish a student unit record data system and a uniform electronic faculty unit record system. During the next five years, these two databases will be implemented to facilitate informed policy decisions regarding students and faculty.

1.3 Monitor and report on minimum degree productivity standards of existing programs.

From 1990-95, public institutions reviewed approximately 1,400 program awards that did not meet minimum degree completion standards based on a five-year average. After institutions prepared review reports, staff recommendations were presented to the Commission for action. As a result of this process, 61 percent of the programs identified for review were continued with specific measures outlined to improve

productivity, and 39 percent of the programs were restructured (consolidated or merged with other programs, converted to an option in another program), placed on inactive status, or terminated (ACHE, Program Viability Analyses, 1995, 1993).

The Commission had planned to conduct the viability analysis again during the 1996-2000 planning cycle using completion standards escalated by 50 percent. However, the 1996 legislature adopted a program viability bill that superseded the Commission's voluntary process. Act 96-557 mandated that the Commission annually monitor and report on minimum degree productivity standards for all existing instructional programs at public two-year and four-year institutions. The Act specified that productivity standards would be based primarily on the annual average number of degrees conferred. Minimum productivity standards were outlined in the Act: diploma, certificate (45-90 qh), associate, and baccalaureate, 7.5; master's, 3.75; education specialist, 3; and doctoral, 2.25.

Act 96-557 offered two possible avenues of exception from the viability standards. First, a student who leaves a vocational and technical program for employment in the same field of study as the program may count as a graduate. However, it is the responsibility of the institution to document and verify to the reasonable satisfaction of ACHE that the student should be counted as a graduate. Second, institutions may request a waiver of non-viability, which may or may not be granted by the Commission, based on unique or extraordinary characteristics of a program. Act 96-557 also required an annual report to the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, State Board of Education, and Council of College and University Presidents. This report will include a list of non-viable programs and a list of non-viable programs granted a waiver with the Commission's rationale for approving the waiver.

1.4 Develop a process by which facilities master plans are submitted to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for review and comment.

Nationwide, facilities master plans are essential tools in long-range institutional planning. Such plans lead to methodical facilities expansion, rather than expansion based on politics or pressure from potential donors. Until the passage of Act 96- 539 during the 1996 legislative session, there was no state-level requirement that Alabama public institutions of higher education formulate facilities master plans. Now, each public two-year and four-year institution of higher education must submit a five-year Facilities Master Plan to the Commission which includes projections for new facility construction and acquisitions. The Commission will review the plans and offer any recommendations and/or comments to the boards of trustees and the State Board of Education. Act 96-539 also placed a one-year freeze on new facilities construction and acquisition, effective January 1, 1997, and requires that all capital budget requests be prioritized and that each request include a needs assessment.

1.5 Guarantee that Alabama students who earn credit at one institution and transfer to another institution receive maximum credit for course work.

For many years, concerns have been expressed about problems in transferring credit earned at one institution to another institution. Students and parents often objected to requirements to re-take courses at the institution to which the student transferred. Two-year institutions wanted students to take all possible courses at their campuses. Receiving institutions desired that students be adequately prepared to pursue their academic programs. Although various committees were established to study the problems, no satisfactory resolution was reached. Troy State University did develop a computerized advising system for transfer from two-year to four-year institutions. The system was implemented statewide in 1993-94, but required that a student know where he/she planned to transfer at the time courses were taken. In 1994, the legislature established the Articulation & General Studies Committee to develop a statewide general studies curriculum and articulation agreement by 1998, examine the need for a uniform course numbering system by 1999, and resolve problems in transferring credit earned at one institution to another institution. The

Articulation and General Studies Committee has met regularly since its inception and is well on the way to developing the statewide general studies curriculum. Once this system becomes operational, it will reduce transfer problems that require resolution.

1.6 Monitor the out-of-state tuition practices of each public institution.

Among the recommendations of the Sixth Quadrennial Evaluation Committee was the suggestion that the Commission revise its approach to formula funding so that policy and process "arranges for an equitable consideration of both instate and out-of-state fee structures for each institution (p. 38)." Additionally, the Joint Legislative Committee on Finances & Budgets also recommended that "ACHE establish a tuition policy that requires all public institutions of higher education to charge and collect a minimum of a 2 to 1 ratio for out-of-state students." Act 96-663 passed during the 1996 legislative session established procedures for determining eligibility for resident/nonresident tuition and set minimum procedures for reclassification from nonresident to resident status. Further, the Act required public institutions to begin a nonresident tuition at least two times the resident tuition, effective August 1, 1997. Governing boards of each institution retain the power to extend resident tuition rates to students who reside in any county within 50 miles of a campus. Act 96-663 also called for an annual audit of the out-of-state tuition practices of each institution by the Commission or the Examiners of Public Accounts.

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Strategic Issue 2:
How can Alabama higher education efficiently and effectively respond to demands for educational needs and services?

Institutions of higher education operate in complex environments of political, social, and economic forces. In responding to the educational needs and demands of these forces, institutions generally cannot take a statewide perspective. What is best for an individual institution may not be what is best for the state. To serve the needs of the state, Alabama higher education must offer high quality, non-duplicative, and efficient educational programs and services.

Strategies: 2.1 Evaluate requests for changes in instructional role matrices based on institutional readiness and role duplication.

From 1989-1991, the Commission adopted instructional role matrices for each four-year institution and for the three categories of two-year institutions (community, junior, technical). These matrices established the parameters for new academic program development within the context of the state-level higher education system. The matrices defined the fields of study and degree levels appropriate for academic program offerings. Existing programs listed in the Commission's academic program inventory form the basis for each instructional role matrix. In 1995, the Commission adopted a policy reaffirming the existing instructional role matrices for four-year institutions and outlining a process for updating the instructional role matrices for two-year institutions. The policy stated that institutions could submit role change requests any time. Each request will be evaluated based on two criteria: institutional readiness and role duplication. Documentation for meeting these two criteria may include, but is not limited to a) a rationale for the role change, b) the relationship of the role change request to the current program mix of the institution, c) viability of existing programs, d) credit hour production in related fields, particularly when the institution wants to offer programs at a higher degree level in that field, and e) implications of role duplication with other institutions in the state. Approval of a role change does not imply new program approval. Program proposals will continue to be evaluated on an individual basis, using the Commission's program review

criteria. The fact that a proposed program is within an institution's role will be only one aspect of new program approval.

2.2 Develop a process to allow community and business leaders and legislators to identify educational services needed within a geographic region and to make recommendations for change.

Alabama higher education must offer educational services that respond to needs of the citizens. These needs often are expressed by community and business leaders and members of the legislature. Unfortunately, in responding to these needs, the potential for duplication of services is great since multiple institutions may be located within a single geographic area. Additionally, it is possible that some needs for educational services may not be addressed without a formal structure for providing ideas about the system of higher education. A coordinated process will allow community and business leaders and legislators to work with educational institutions within a geographic region. This cooperative relationship will allow community leaders to share information on educational services needed and to make recommendations for changes.

2.3 Set up a planning initiative for health-related programs to identify needed changes in existing programs and to respond to work force needs for training new practitioners.

In March 1995, the Alabama Health Care Reform Task Force released its report. The Subcommittee on Health Professions Education addressed many issues related to health professions education. "The health care system is rapidly changing and moving to more managed care with greater emphasis on primary care, prevention, and outpatient services. Significant pressure on costs is part of this change. State government has interest both as the principal educator of health professionals and as a provider of health services to see that the health professionals being educated at this time are appropriate for our health care system in the coming decade. Planning educational programs requires timely and reliable information on what health professionals are currently available and what current providers and practitioners believe will be needed in the future. Given the central role that the state plays in education, professional licensure, and health planning, there is a surprising lack of available information about the current location and mix of health care professionals in our state. Similarly, there is no systematic and consistent source of information about current and future needs of health care professionals in our state (pp. 13-14)." Based on these findings, the Health Care Reform Task force recommended that "there should be created and regularly convened an advisory board of the health profession work force needs of the future. The advisory board should be representative of those who employ and use health care professionals and should act in an advisory capacity to the various agencies of state government such as the . . . Commission on Higher Education . . . . The Subcommittee is concerned that there is a real possibility that the state will spend educational dollars training health professionals that are not needed for our future health care system which will waste scarce state resources, inflate costs in our health care system, and train our young people for unneeded careers (p. 15)."

There is no doubt that institutions are interested in offering new programs in health care and related sciences. Last year, approximately 15 percent of all new program plans at public institutions were for health-care related programs. At all degree levels, health-care related programs ranked first or second in the number of planned programs (ACHE, Planning Document Updates, 1995). This interest in health care programs was evident in May-July 1995 when the two-year system submitted 26 proposals for new allied health programs in response to the termination of the UAB Allied Health Linkage. The Commission did approve 14 of the 26 two-year allied health program proposals, with the understanding that a planning process would be established for health-related programs. Further, the Commission stated that no additional new allied health programs would be considered for two-year institutions until the completion of an allied health study. Since that time, the Commission has appointed an advisory committee and employed a consultant to examine supply and demand of associate-level allied health practitioners in selected fields.

2.4 Evaluate how a state-level, coordinated approach to technology-assisted education can help Alabama higher education better serve its students.

Many technologies are now available and emerging which could enhance the ability of Alabama higher education to serve the needs of the state. With these technologies, however, come three related issues: quality, funding, and coordination. Does the technology support a quality educational experience? Are resources available to support technological development? How should technological services be coordinated to best meet the needs of the state? If these questions are not addressed, potential exists for great duplication of effort and resources.

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Strategic Issue 3:
How can Alabama higher education identify and address access, completion, a. d equity issues?

Given that the level of educational attainment in Alabama is lower than the regional d national averages, higher education must analyze why some students persist and complete academic degrees and others do not. The state loses a valuable resource in the "under-education" of its citizens. Clearly, some barriers to access and retention are personal and may have no resolution within the higher education system. Where changes in the system can be made at a reasonable cost and increase educational attainment, they must be made for the common good. Further, many equity issues in higher education exist in the state. The equity issues do not always relate to students, bu! also to faculty and administrators and chief executive officers. Addressing equity issues is in the best interest of all Alabamians.

Strategies:3.1 Improve the academic preparation of high school students.

Many students who graduate from high school are not prepared for the work place, nor are they ready to enroll in technical, community, and junior colleges or four-year institutions. In 1991 in the southern region, one-third of the first-time freshmen in public and private institutions were enrolled in at least one remedial course, often mathematics. If the academic preparation of high school students could be strengthened, both students and faculty could devote more time to the

pursuit of academic degrees and employers could hire a well-educated workforce. Although Alabama higher education cannot directly affect the academic preparation of high school students, there are many cooperative efforts that have been and can continue to be implemented with K-12. For example, the state-level student unit record database could support a reporting process back to local school systems providing information on how students perform during the freshmen year. Such reports could help local school systems determine where changes are needed in instruction. Postsecondary institutions also could review admissions criteria to determine if standards should be raised. Additionally, in 1993, an act was passed which called for the establishment of a postsecondary education communication center in the state. This center was to be created through a contract with a state educational institution. The purpose of this center was to seek methods to improve participation in postsecondary education and retention in high school and to encourage the State Board of Education and local boards of education to adopt courses of study that prepare students for postsecondary education. Since this center was not funded by the legislature, it has never been established. Two-year and four-year institutions could work together to secure financial support for the project.

3.2 Identify and address where possible the barriers to completing a baccalaureate degree in four

years.

In Alabama, no state-level time-to-degree completion studies have been done, although individual institutions are collecting data to fulfill the requirements for the Student Right-to-Know Act. Nationally, the time-to-degree completion rate has been increasing. In 1977, for example, 45 percent of college graduates completed the baccalaureate degree in less than or equal to four years. By 1990, that percentage had dropped to 31 percent. Further, the percentage of students who take longer than six years to complete the baccalaureate degree has increased from 25 percent in 1977 to 32 percent in 1990 (USE, p. 179). States that have completed time-to-degree studies report a time-to-degree range for first-time full-time students in public four-year institutions of 15 to 33 percent after four years and 42 to 61 percent after six years (Blanco, pp. 3-5). There are many possible reasons why students are taking longer to complete baccalaureate degrees, many of which may be related to personal and family commitments. However, until a study is conducted to explore the extent of the problem in Alabama higher education, legislators and other public policy makers will form opinions and judgments based on some source of information that may not accurately represent the problem. Consider, for example, that in 1995, the Alabama Postsecondary Education Sub-Committee of the Joint Legislative Committee on Finances & Budgets issued a report that questioned whether Alabama institutions might be lengthening the time needed to complete a degree by adding required courses or by counseling students to take less than a full load to keep students longer, consequently generating more funds from state appropriations and tuition. Once the barriers to completing a baccalaureate degree are explored fully, specific strategies can be developed for addressing any institutional barriers that might be identified.

3.3 Develop strategies for decreasing students' dependence on loans to meet their educational costs, particularly during the first two years of college-level study.

In the last decade, loans have replaced grants and scholarships as the major source of funds for students to meet their educational costs. Alabama's grant and aid funding of $6.2 million is one-tenth of the regional average of $66.2 million. The latest student aid data for Alabama show a decrease in grant dollars per undergraduate enrollment from $103 in 1990-91 to $63 in 1993-94. The national average for 1993-94 was $350 (Davis, Nastelli, & Redd). Studies show that students who successfully complete the first two years of college have a greater likelihood of graduating. However, if students incur substantial loan debts during the first two years of college, they may not be able to continue this debt burden to complete the baccalaureate degree unless they sustain full-time enrollment and demonstrate satisfactory academic progress. This problem could be particularly significant for students who come from poor economic backgrounds and from homes where parents did not attend college. Not addressing this problem likely will lead to greater dropout rates during the first two years of college.

3.4 Evaluate off-campus instruction in Alabama higher education.

Although access is one of the five state-level goals for Alabama higher education, it is not synonymous with convenience. To what extent should the state provide reasonable access to high quality off-campus instruction? New and existing off-campus instruction is authorized and regulated by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. However, the procedures and criteria used in this review have come under criticism in recent years. The Sixth Quadrennial Evaluation Committee found that the Commission's "approach to review and evaluation of off-campus offerings was seen by some as an example of Commission micromanagement of campuses (p. 29)." Based on institutional ideas and the Quadrennial Evaluation Committee's recommendations, the Commission revised its policy and practice in reviewing and evaluating off-campus programs/courses in 1995 so that review guidelines and policies address qualitative factors in greater detail, reduce paperwork for the staff and the institutions, and include accountability measures. These guidelines and policies should be monitored on a continuous basis. Further, the Commission must develop a process for handling violations of off-campus policies and guidelines.

3.5 Increase the participation of blacks citizens in Alabama higher education.

In Alabama, minorities comprise approximately 27 percent of the population, and most of the minority population is black. These figures are expected to remain stable through the year 2000. By 2020, minorities are projected to increase to 29 percent of the state's population, and will continue to be comprised primarily of black citizens. These projections have important implications for Alabama higher education (SREB, p. 8). "Educational attainment levels among whites . . . continue to outpace those among nonwhites. . . While the gap between whites and nonwhites in the proportion of high school graduates has lessened during the past 20 years, there has been a steady rise over the last four decades in the difference between the two groups relative to college graduates . . . Why, however, has the gap between whites and nonwhites actually widened over the last four decades at the highest levels of educational attainment (i.e., graduation from a college or university)? Out-migration of many of the state's most highly educated nonwhites is apparently part of the explanation. Since 1950, over one-half million nonwhites have left the state than have entered and, as indicated previously, it is the more highly educated, highly skilled persons who generally move . . . nonwhites are at a greater disadvantage than whites relative to the possibility for high level achievement in the educational arena. Nonwhite high school graduates are more likely than whites to originate in low socioeconomic settings . . . In addition, a larger proportion of nonwhite high school graduates have traditionally enrolled in a non-college curriculum, opting instead for training in the manual trades or business education courses. Family background considerations (e.g., a larger proportion of single-parent families and parents with limited levels of schooling) may also impact negatively on the chances for success at the highest levels of the educational experience (Bogie, pp. 11-13)." To meet the needs of all its citizens, the state must develop specific strategies to enhance participation of black citizens in higher education.

3.6 Improve gender equity in Alabama higher education.

Many strategies have been developed at national and institutional levels for assessing and addressing gender equity issues. At the national level, The Office of Women in Higher Education of the American Council on Education began in 1977 a National Identification Program for the Advancement of Women in Higher Education Administration (ACE-NIP). Recently, the name has been changed to The National Network of Women Leaders, but the program continues to be based in the office of the American Council on Education. ACE-NIP started a network of women and men in each state to assist in the identification and placement of women in high level positions in higher education. The program also educated men and women about women's issues and the important contribution women make to the academic community. In 1994, ACE-NIP adopted a vision statement which cited significant accomplishments and challenges ahead. "The number of women participating and succeeding in higher education at all levels has steadily increased [over the 16-year history of NIP], as have the number of women in senior administrative positions, especially presidencies. But the gains of recent years have not come easily, and much remains to be accomplished . . . Our ultimate goal is the inclusion of the voices and values of all women and men . . . in molding the future of higher education and society (ACE)." ACE-NIP has a coordinator in each state to set up a network of male and female administrators to assist in the identification and placement of women in high level positions in higher education. The Alabama coordinator has been appointed recently; , the network for Alabama is in its planning stages; the Commission should promote this initiative.

At the campus level, strategies which have been incorporated include "identifying women's issues on campus; conducting studies on the status of women; developing women's networks on campus (building community); initiating mentoring and specialized training programs for women; developing women's studies programs and women's centers; developing official commissions or advisory committees on campus; organizing a group or groups of women on campus; taking action to bring about change; monitoring the progress in dealing with women's issues . . . Whatever we do on campus to build support

and enhance the environment to bring about equity for women ultimately brings equity for all (Amos, pp. 39, 41)." If gender equity issues are not addressed, the Alabama higher education system loses an important resource.

3.7 Fund the tuition assistance program for students attending private institutions of higher education at its maximum level.

Alabama law allows eligible students at private higher education institutions to receive $1,200 per academic year, although funding for FY 96 was $816 per eligible student and may be lower for FY 97. The state of Alabama is not unique in providing assistance for students attending private institutions. Most states include private higher education in their student aid subsidy programs (Education Commission on the States); and one-third (16) of all states offer direct tuition equalization grants (student grants to offset the cost differences between public and private colleges) to students attending private institutions (National Association of State Scholarship and Grant Programs). Over half (26) of all states offer specific purpose grants and contracts (e.g., stipends for engineering programs, research grants, wildlife research, health programs, assistance to dental schools) to private higher education institutions; six of these states also provide general purpose direct grants to private higher education institutions (Education

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